

Leonardo da Vinci Programme

5th Partners meeting in Akureyri. PM5 Final conference
4. October 2013



Video from the final conference:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1vr72R5cUU&list=UUzQIZGT8ZRhY_IeMOShPorQ

Eðvald Sveinn Valgarðsson

Quality Manager at Meat Processing Company Kjarnafæði Akureyri.

Good day everyone.

My name is Eðvald Sveinn Valgarðsson and I work as a Quality Manager at Kjarnafæði and also as a teacher of meat processing at VMA.

I will now switch into Icelandic

I want to review history. When I was learning meat processing too many years ago we were perhaps 10 – 15 apprentices in a group. At the time we were almost just thrown into the deep end. This was a group of people, important for the companies, learning from each other but of course also from the masters of trade in the companies. The organization was not detailed and assessing not very focussed.

One aspect was that apprentices were cheap labour and I am not sure if people realized if there was need to educate and train people for the trade.

Today the situation is quite different in food processing companies. I am overseeing apprentices in my company, I am also a teacher at the school.

The companies rely heavily on equipment, expensive and complicated machinery and technology.

Perhaps the only work not relying on computer controlled technology is the worker cutting the meat off bones. However this also needs computer literacy because we need to register everything in and out with a computer program.

This situation has changed the necessary competences for workers within the companies. The companies are fewer and bigger. The companies almost stopped taking in apprentices, this was considered almost a dying trade, but the last few years we have been changing this. A combined effort from companies and the school in Akureyri has led to more apprentices graduating in Akureyri than in the Reykjavik area (many more people living in the Reykjavik area).

A new curriculum gives us freedom and possibilities. This is perhaps what we are discussing here. The school can move the learning to the companies. In Reykjavik the school has been emphasizing learning in school but here in VMA we only teach general subjects and theory in school but the practical teaching and training is done in the companies.

It is completely impossible for the school to buy equipment to use in teaching because these machines are very expensive and would become outdated very soon. The companies are renewing the equipment and we can have access to the technology in the

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companies.

Today this study needs a strong evaluation from the school, we need to list the competences needed and the school must be the one doing the following of students when they are learning at the workplace.

I am now working on both sides. The companies do not allow time for reflection and everything must be done at once. Therefore it is important that an external body, the school, follows the students.

I want to suggest that each month we hold a meeting with each student and the mentor to assess the student and to see if he is achieving the learning goals. We need a list of competences and assignments and then we see if they have been achieved.

If they have not been met we need to redo the goals. The companies are used to working like this because official regulating and accrediting bodies work like this. We would welcome this kind of evaluation and followup with our apprentices.

One thing I am very interested in is skills evaluation. Assessing workers and interviewing them about their skills and then they get their skills accredited. I want to take this further. If the skills evaluation shows that someone has gained the competences required the student should be allowed to have the skills evaluation and enter the trade exam even if the apprentice period is not finished. (In some cases people have been working in the company much longer than they have been contracted as apprentices.)

I think this might be a solution of some kind. To learn how to bone meat the norm is a period of several months. But if the student is able to acquire the competence needed for this in a shorter time this should lead to a shorter apprentice period. This should be more flexible, it may be beneficial to both the student (being able to finish sooner, get a full qualification and higher salary) and for the company, a shorter binding contract may be a good thing in some circumstances.

We should look forward and there is a great need for education and continuing education opportunities in the food sector, serving European markets etc. The official bodies like the sectoral educational committee is important but the initiative must come from the school.

Thank you.

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